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Author of "THEO," "KATHLEEN," and "LINDSAY'S LUCY"



JARL'S DAUGHTER;

AND OTHER STORIES.


BY MRS. F. H. BURNETT.

AUTHOR OF

'Theo,' 'Kathleen,' 'Miss Crespigny,' and 'Pretty Polly Pemberton.'

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
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AUTHOR OF

"THEO," "KATHLEEN," "MISS CRESPIGNY," "A QUIET LIFE,"
"PRETTY POLLY PEMBERTON," "LINDSAY'S LUCK."

REPRINTED FROM "PETERSON'S MAGAZINE," FOR WHICH
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JARL'S DAUGHTER.

A Love Story.

BY MRS. FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.

AUTHOR OF

"KATHLEEN," "THEO," "PRETTY POLLY PEMBERTON,"
"MISS CRESPIGNY," "A QUIET LIFE," ETC.

MRS. PENRYTH was fond of company, that was a well-established fact; and another fact, equally well established, was that no one was better able to entertain people and make them enjoy themselves than she was.

It seemed as though the handsome sea-side villa, bright Penrydden, which was so charmingly situated on the coast of Cornwall, must have been built purposely for the accommodation of guests, and those guests the favored ones of Mrs. Penryth. It was such a comfortable, pleasant place, with its flowers, and gardens,

and terraces. There was such a splendid view of the country from one window, and such a glorious look-out on the sea from another; the grounds were so admirably suited for sentimental strolls, and the lawn so admirably adapted to croquet.

Just now the establishment was pretty well filled, to Mrs. Penryth's great delight. There were two lawyers, a doctor, and a soldier, one widow, one matron, and two or three pretty girls. The widow was just in an interesting stage of mourning, and consequently a trifle dangerous; the matron was as great a matchmaker as good old Mrs. Penryth herself; the girls were all paired off with agreeable masculines, and accordingly, in the second week, every one pronounced themselves charmed.

Prominent among her sister belles shone pretty Bessie Arbuthnot, the fairest, the most charming, and Mrs. Penryth's greatest favorite.

Whereas Belle, and Alice, and Maude, were

blondes, and Jennie and Kate were brunettes, Bessie Arbuthnot was neither blonde nor brunette, but far more dangerous than either.

There she sits in the open window, resting her folded hands on the wide sill, and lifting her face to old Mr. Penryth, as he talks to her, — just the sort of girl to throw either blonde or brunette into the shade. A fair, aristocratic-looking face, with a beautiful mouth, whose delicate upper lip has just the least perceptible hauteur in its curves; large, handsome brown eyes, with a sweet look in them, and a great deal of soft brown hair. She was very girlish and very innocent-looking, but at the same time there was plenty of style in her girlish manner, and a touch of high-bred reserve in her air, which was at once natural and graceful.

Mrs. Penryth was of the opinion that the whole world could not produce another Bessie Arbuthnot, and her good-natured old husband quite agreed with her. They had known Bessie

ever since she was a young lady in short dresses and French grammars, and from that time upward had regarded it as their special mission to adore her.

She had spent the whole of the summer with them, and it had been a very happy one. Early in the spring Mrs. Penryth's health had been a little frail, and Bessie had left London, and come to take care of her. It had been rather quiet at first, perhaps, after the gay end of "the season;" but Bessie Arbuthnot made a very charming young home goddess, as she nursed and petted her friend, and read the papers, and poured out old Mr. Penryth's tea. But April brought a visitor, who claimed to be a friend.

"Capt. Marc Desbro," his card said, and Bessie smiled and blushed a little when Mrs. Penryth handed it to her, and said she remembered meeting the gentleman several times, and that he had asked her permission to call upon her when business should carry him to Cornwall.

And this had been the beginning of a very interesting story. April had passed, and May drawing to a close, when one evening, after a long ride with Capt. Marc, pretty Bessie came to her old friend in a very charming state of blushing tremor, and after a little fluttered hesitation that was very pretty, held out her fair hand with a ring on the engagement finger, faltering out something about "Marc," and "promises" and "Christmas," and ended with more blushes, and a few such delicious tears as I suppose most tender-hearted girls shed when the great change comes over their calm lives.

Dear old Mrs. Penryth had cried a little, too. Not much, of course, but just a few affectionate tears springing from her warm, old heart, as she kissed the girl, and fondled her, and hoped she would be happy. "Happy always, my dear," she said, in her sweet, kindly voice, "and a good, good woman and wife."

And now it was the beginning of June, and

Capt. Marc had been to London and back half a dozen times, to pay his fair betrothed flying visits; and here he was again with the rest of the company, the handsomest man, the most popular, and the best croquet-player of all the party, and in her tender, fresh, young heart, pretty Bessie was adoring and making a hero and a god of him.

As she sat at the open window, talking to Mr. Penryth, she was thinking of Capt. Marc, wondering where he was. He had gone out soon after breakfast, saying he was going on the bay to fish, and would not be back until evening, and he had not yet returned. She was thinking of him always, it seemed to her: and even now she could scarcely hear her host's voice as he chatted for her benefit.

"There!" he said at last, "look at that girl, Bessie, my dear, and tell me if you ever saw a handsomer model for a heroine!"

Bessie turned her eyes upon the beach with

her soft, ready smile, but it brightened into something of admiration, as she caught sight of the figure to which he had called her attention.

Out in the sunlight, upon the shining sand, a girl was standing, and from their place at the window they could see her clearly. She was tall, but poorly dressed, in the rough dress of the fisherwomen, who were so plentiful on that wild coast; but in spite of it, no one could have looked at her without a sense of wondering admiration.

Her figure was perfect. The face, which she shaded with one brown hand, as she gazed out upon the sea, was like the face of some Nubian queen in its dark-eyed, olive-skinned beauty: her magnificent unkempt hair hung loose over her ragged, scarlet cloak, and the sea-breeze blew it out like a black banner. Still the oddly picturesque perfection seemed a little out of place. Her ragged, half-savage dress showed her to be no more than the rest of the hard-

worked, hard-faring coast women: her slumberous eyes had the stolid gaze theirs had, and as she stood there, picturesque and statue-like in the sunshine, she was nothing more, with all her beauty, but a splendid, idle, soulless creature, with a magnificent physique.

“How handsome she is!” said Bessie. “Who is she, Mr. Penryth?”

“One of the fishermen’s daughters,” he answered. “Poor girl! Her father is one of the worst of a bad crew, and she has been brought up in her mother’s steps, to wait on him and row his boat, living as she can. By-the-way, Anne, turning to his wife, “have you spoken to Jarl about that girl again?”

Mrs. Penryth shook her head.

“Yes, but it is always the same story. He can’t spare her, and wouldn’t, if he could. He doesn’t want her made a fine lady of, he says. I am afraid we shall be obliged to give it up, Martin.”

"You see," said the old gentleman, explanatorily to Bessie, "Mrs. Penryth and I had a little plan on hand. We thought we could help the girl to be more respectable by taking charge of her. She is too pretty to be left to herself; but her father is against us."

"What a pity!" said Bessie, and then her eyes went back to the shore again.

The girl was sauntering on slowly, sometimes burying her bare, arched feet in the sand, and now and then stopping to shade her face with her hand, and look out over the sea. It seemed as if she was waiting for something, and it proved she was, for at last a boat rounded the point, and as it came in sight, she hurried off to meet it.

There were two men in the boat Bessie could see, but they were too far away to be easily recognized, though one appeared to be tall and well-dressed, and was evidently a gentleman. She watched them idly as they rowed in, and then the tall one jumped out and raised his hat

to the girl as she reached them. They seemed to exchange a few words, for they stood together several minutes, the man gallant and graceful, the girl looking a little abashed and awkward as he spoke. Then she got into the boat, taking the oars he had left, and as they rowed off he touched his hat again with a careless ease, and turned away.

"It looks a little like Marc — Capt. Desbro," said Bessie, blushing faintly at her unconscious mistake.

Old Mr. Penryth bent forward.

"It does look like him, to be sure," he said, and then a curious, anxious cloud fell on his good-natured face. "It is Marc," he added.

And so it was. In a few moments he was near enough to allow of their seeing him quite plainly, as he strode slowly toward the house, and entered the wide, iron gates.

Bessie was still at the window when he came into the room, and, of course, their eyes met

first, as lovers' eyes always do. Hers were very bright, and soft, and tender; and there was a pretty sort of gladness in their brown depths; but, strange to say, his were a little troubled, or conscious, as it were, and a faint, scarcely perceptible flush rose to his face as he came forward.

But if anything had annoyed him, it lost its power as he took his seat by her side. He began to tell her about his fishing-excursion, laughing at his awkwardness, or ill-luck, for his spoils had scarcely paid for his labor.

"I should have enjoyed myself more at home with you," he said, dropping his voice in his favorite fashion as he spoke.

"It wasn't worth the trouble!" And Bessie blushed softly, and taking up her neglected netting, began to work again.

"I saw you land," she said, at last. "Mr. Penryth and I were watching Jarl's daughter, and we saw her go to meet the boat. How beautiful she is! Don't you think so?"

"Yes," said Capt. Marc, catching her dainty work lightly, and prisoning the pretty fingers in its meshes. "But how do you suppose I can have eyes for Jarl's daughter?"

But careless as the action was, it might almost have had a motive, and careless as the graceful reply sounded, his handsome face had flushed slightly as he spoke.

He was not quite at ease that evening, it seemed. However unaccountable his restlessness was, he was certainly restless. Bessie could not help noticing it as she watched him, and she told him so with a very charming interestedness.

"I am tired," he said, smiling down at her in the tender, yet half-unconscious way that always set her heart beating. "The fishing was too much for me."

They were out on the lawn, then, taking a turn at croquet, and his usual skill seemed to have quite deserted him. After a few terribly unfortunate hits, by which he roused the indig-

nation of his partners, he flung his mallet away and gave up his place; and when, in the course of a quarter of an hour, Bessie turned to the seat on which he had been lounging, she found he was gone.

Of course, she did not like it. A pretty girl, with an engagement-ring on her finger, naturally does not feel flattered at the thought that, after a day's absence, her lover can feel happy anywhere but in her presence. "He might have stayed," she said, inwardly, but that was all; though it must be confessed she devoted her attention to her companion in the game, a trifle more exclusively than she would have done if she had not felt slightly piqued.

"I don't see Capt. Desbro," she said, carelessly, to the gentleman, at last.

Noel Craigmiles looked down at her sweet face adoringly, as he always did, for Desbro's good luck had been his misfortune, and Bessie Arbuthnot was the grand passion of his life. Her most

careless tone had a meaning to him, and just now he had been inwardly calling his rival a presumptuous fool to lose a moment he might have lived by her side.

“I saw one of the servants come and speak to him, and he left the grounds,” he said. “A matter of business, I suppose.”

Bessie did not make any reply. She had a sensitive horror of appearing to exhibit her claims, so she finished her game with the most graceful *sang froid* in the world.

Capt. Marc did not make his appearance at all that evening until supper-time; but then he made up for lost opportunities during the moonlight *tête-à-tête* he enjoyed with Miss Arbuthnot promenading the stone terrace.

Every one acknowledged him to be a fascinating man, but no one had ever felt the power of his fascinations as pretty, warm-hearted Bessie did. His tender words and tender ways made him a hero in her innocent eyes, and she looked up to

him as adoringly and trustingly as none but such girls can look up to a man. Knowing so little of the world, she never dreamed of thinking that, perhaps, he had called other women the same sweet-sounding names that made her heart beat so swiftly, and that, perhaps, other lips than hers had trembled under his kisses. As for him, he was as much in love as it was possible for a man of his nature to be. Such men usually end their indifferent lives by winning just such sweet women as other men would have died for—it is the way of the world—and Bessie Arbuthnot was pretty and stylish, and suited his fastidiousness as few other girls would have done.

He kissed her at the door before he let her go, and held her hand a moment, caressingly.

“Good-night, darling!” he whispered. And in the fashion of men of his kind, he threw a tender truth into the words which made them beautiful; and Bessie carried them in her heart, and dreamed of them, but never dreamed that the lips that

uttered them would break her fair faith in the world forever.

It was almost a week after this that she saw Jarl's daughter again. Cleo the girl's name was, or more properly Cleopatra, as one of her father's patrons had named her for the sake of her dark eyes. A grand-sounding name it was, but the first part of it had clung to her, perhaps, because no commoner one seemed suited to her.

Among other amusements, a boating-excursion had been made up, and Jarl's boat was engaged, and as Bessie stepped into it with Desbro, she saw the girl sitting at the prow, her statuesque face turned seaward, and her grand, sombre eyes dropped gloomily upon the waves.

Her dress was a little neater than it had been before, and her hair was folded crown-like, in a wonder of a coil, across her head, but her slender, arched feet were bare, and the scarlet cloak falling back, showed her beautiful brown arm, rounded and perfect as the arms of some Greek model.

She raised her head quickly when Capt. Marc spoke to her, and the red blood flamed across her handsome face, as if she was startled, or angry; but the next moment she turned away again, and sat silent, idly trailing her hand through the water.

Bessie watched her with a sort of interest in her picturesque perfection, and prompted by a kindly girlish curiosity tried to talk to her, but it was of no avail. She could elicit nothing but monosyllables, and those given with a sort of reluctant ungraciousness. But during the whole of the trip to their destination, she could not help noticing that whenever she turned suddenly, she found the great, brilliant eyes fixed upon her with a curious, passionate scrutiny, and as soon as the girl perceived herself noticed, her gaze was withdrawn.

It would have been scarcely possible to find two girls so startlingly unlike as these two were. The one with her pretty, proud face, her dainty

dress, and her delicate hands, the other with her dark-eyed, olive-skinned beauty and uncultured splendor.

Capt. Marc, leaning back in his seat, holding Bessie Arbuthnot's dainty lace-covered parasol, and listening to her sweet, pure-toned voice, looked from one face to the other, from the dark to the fair, and oddly enough seemed to forget himself, and was not quite coherent. Indeed, he became so absent at length, that Bessie stopped and looked up at him in a little astonishment. Perhaps the glance was inopportune, for she saw that his attention was fixed on the figure at the prow, and Jarl's daughter, sitting as before, with her statuesque head turned seaward, showed a flame of velvet-scarlet on her dark cheek, and a strange glow in her handsome eyes.

Under some circumstances Bessie would have smiled the soft, ready smile, and spoken again, but something in the girl's expression made her pause abruptly. The vague admiration in his eyes, the touch of warmth half-startled her.

Bessie was a proud girl, proud as such high-bred, high-spirited girls ever are, and though she did not dream for an instant that the beautiful, barbarous creature might prove a rival, a faint coldness showed itself in her manner when she finished what she had been saying.

It was a gay party that landed among the rocks. Even Capt. Marc lost his absent-mindedness, and hovered round his fair betrothed with his usual *debonnair* air of proprietorship.

In spite of Alice, and Maud, and Grace, half Mrs. Penryth's masculine guests would have given their good-looking heads to bend over Bessie Arbuthnot as Desbro bent over her, and receive the sweet smiles that came so readily when he spoke. But Fate is Fate, and the emerald ring on the slim, white finger, had dashed many bright hopes to the ground; so the quandom adorers philosophically attached themselves to the pretty girls, who were not averse to listening to their soft nothings, and only now and then apostro-

phized Capt Marc as "a lucky fellow!" But there was one man who did not find his fate so easy to bear, and whom no Alice or Maud could ever have consoled for the loss of the woman he coveted. That man was Noel Craigmiles.

He was not Bessie's ideal—never had been, never could be, but he was a very loyal, honest young man, and very much in love with her. From his eighteenth year he had adored Bessie Arbuthnot, and at twenty-five he was adoring her still, even while she wore Marc Desbro's ring on her finger, and Marc Desbro's kisses on her lips. He was very much in love, I say, and he was content to talk to her when Marc was away, and wait on her, and pick up her handkerchief.

He had not much occupation in that line this evening, for the captain was even more lover-like than usual. So, when dinner was over, he wandered away from the rest, and took refuge among a group of rocks, where there was a fine view of the Point, and he could be alone with his half-bitter dreams.

He was leaning against a great, gray stone, cigar in hand, watching the sea, and feeling a little sore against the world generally, when he was roused from his reverie by a touch upon his arm, and turning round sharply, he was surprised to see the girl Cleo standing at his side.

Her eyes were glowing restlessly, and her whole face was full of a sort of suppressed passionate resentfulness, which contrasted strangely with her sullen awkwardness as she spoke to him. It seemed as though some fierce impulse moved her.

"I suppose I hain't got no right to ask questions of gentlefolks like you!" she said, roughly enough, but still without the odd Cornish burr in her speech. "I thought, maybe, you'd answer me, if any one would. You don't look as grand as the rest."

Noel smiled in spite of his astonishment.

"What do you wish to know?" he asked.

"About her!" motioning with her head over

her shoulder to where Bessie stood, chatting to Marc Desbro and writing on the sand with her dainty parasol.

Following her motion, Noel saw this, and turning back to the girl's face in a curious surprise, he noticed that she had caught her breath sharply, and was twisting her fingers in an odd, unconscious way, round a piece of shabby, black ribbon, that hung from her shapely neck. He could not help observing this ribbon, for its end was concealed in her bosom, and the fierceness in her clinging fingers expressed itself so plainly.

"Well?" he said.

"I thought, maybe, she might want some one to wait on her—a—a sort of servant." She was twisting the ribbon round and round nervously, and speaking in a confused faltering.

"I thought, maybe, she—she'd take me. I'm tired of doing a man's work, and living a dog's life. I'd like to go with her; she's pretty and rich, and I've heard say, kind enough."

"I am sorry I don't know," said Noel. "You had better ask her yourself. Or, probably, Mrs. Penryth might do something for you."

There was a pause, and then she spoke again.

"She'll need a servant, when she's married," she said, the words coming slowly. "My father told me she was going to be married soon. Do you think she is?"

There was something so strange in her manner that Noel found himself staring at her. Her slow, handsome face had an odd, repressed excitement in it, and her hand had wound itself so tightly in the narrow ribbon, that it seemed as if it would cut the flesh. He was not used to mystery, and this savored so strongly of the mysterious, that he could only stare at her in blank amazement.

For a moment she met his glance stolidly, then her eyes fell, and her nervous, unconscious fingers twisted the slender silk so tightly, that even as he gazed at her it snapped and broke, and as

it parted, something slipped from it and rolled against the rock with a tinkling sound.

He saw it fall, and saw her spring to reach it, and then, strangely enough, her excitement seemed to communicate itself to him, for at the first sight of it, his face flushed hotly, and he sprang toward her, catching her arm as she took the trinket from the sand.

"Show it to me!" he demanded, almost fiercely; and as he spoke, his grasp upon her had more roughness in it than he had ever dreamed he could have used toward any woman.

"Show it to me, I say!" he repeated.

But she held it fast, and stood there panting, with her hand clenched against her breast.

He loosened his hold a little, and spoke to her sternly.

"I saw it as it fell," he said. "I know whose face it holds. I have seen it in Marc Desbro's hand a hundred times."

She did not oppose him a moment more. She

laid the false, handsome-faced picture in his hand, and slipped away from him with a low, frightened cry, the red on her cheeks turning to white, the white to red again, as she leaned against the rock, trembling from head to foot.

“Don’t tell on me!” she almost gasped. “You’ve found me out, but don’t tell on me. Father would kill me. It won’t do any harm to let me know. Is she going to marry—him?”

“Wait a minute,” said Noel, struck to the core of his heart. “I saw a man and a woman walking in the moonlight last night. I saw them the night before, and the night before that. Who was it?”

“It was us,” she said, shivering. “Me and him. He’s a fine gentleman, and I’m like dirt under his feet, you know; but he says he loves me and I’m pretty. I’m named for a queen, he told me; and he says the name suits me.”

She was trembling, and reddening, and paling—shaking as if in a vague terror of what she had told him.

Honest Noel stood up and stared at her blankly, and then, in his recognition of the truth, a rough word slipped out of his mouth.

“Good heavens!” he said, “what a villain he is! Listen here,” he went on. “Take my advice, my girl, and go home, and keep out of his way.”

He stooped and stretched out his hand instinctively, she had turned so coldly white. But she drew back, and leaned against the rock, motioning him away.

“He’s been lying to one of us,” she said, with a sudden strange steadiness. “Who’s he been lying to? Is he going to marry her?”

“He has been lying to both of you,” said Noel, with blazing eyes; “but he is going to marry Miss Arbuthnot.”

“How long has it been settled?” said the girl, through her white teeth.

“Three months.”

There was a long silence, in which Jarl’s

daughter stood braced, with her hands behind her, against the rock, her face stony and pallid in fierce resistlessness. She moved at last, and turned round to him, folding her cloak around her.

“Well,” she said, stolidly, “I’ll go now. I might as well; I know all I came for. I daresay you’ll tell, if you want to tell. I shan’t ask you to keep quiet; but I’d better be dead than alive, when father knows. I’d better be dead. He’d tramp me under his feet this minute.”

“Wait,” said Noel, in a horror-stricken whisper. “What are you talking about? I—Do you mean the—the worst?”

She had been trying to brave it out when she last spoke, but his sudden horror, as the whole shameful truth dawned upon him, broke her hardihood down, and she struck her clenched hand upon the rock with a low, fierce cry, her face scarlet.

“The worst!” she panted. “His dogs know

more than I do — his dogs are treated better. I'm handsomer, maybe — that's all; but it is the worst, even to such as me."

Noel fairly groaned. Thinking of pretty, innocent Bessie, his very heart sickened. It was such a horrible blow to him, so unlooked for! Even if he had not trusted Marc Desbro wholly, he would never have dreamed of this. But as he looked at the girl's blanched, defiant face, the recollection of many circumstances he had barely noticed at the time of their occurrence, came back to him, and with torturing distinctness.

The first day he had seen Desbro, he had come upon him on the beach, as, spy-glass to his eyes, he watched a little boat coming shoreward, slowly, with a woman at the oars.

He had not known him then as one of his fellow guests, and had not noticed the woman's face as she sprang out. Women who rowed, and fished, and did men's work, were plentiful enough at Penrydden, and he did not give her a second

thought. He had not understood the fishing excursions that kept Miss Arbuthnot's lover on the bay through the long summer days, though he often wondered at them. Poor Noel! he had blamed his rival as a careless wooer, but he had been too generous ever to accuse him of even the disposition to wrong his sweet betrothed. "He's a lucky fellow, confound it!" he had sighed sometimes, "but he suits her better than I should have done, I suppose!" And he had felt a good-natured sort of reverence for the man who had been so much more fortunate than himself, and who seemed to bear his good fortune so easily and gracefully.

In some men's minds there would have been a faint sense of triumph in a rival's unworthiness. Not so with poor, honest Noel. There was only one feeling in his heart, a feeling which was a struggling combination of horror, indignation, and pitying grief. Pity for innocent, brown-eyed Bessie, indignation and disgust for the systematic

treachery which the man who professed to love her had displayed. What could he say to this passionate-faced, fierce-eyed young creature, who stood before him, defying her terror and shame with a dogged resolution that might have grown out of her savage life. He watched her for a silent moment, and then, unavoidably, a question leaped out.

“What are you going to do?”

She turned her handsome eyes slowly upon him, as if she had never thought of the future, and then a strange shadow settled on them as her face turned seaward again. She did not say a word, but the slow motion made Noel shudder, he scarcely knew why.

The very next moment she flamed up again with a burning, angry color, as the sound of gay voices floated across the sands.

“They’re calling for you,” she said, bitterly. “That’s her voice now. It minds me of a ringing of bells. I’m going back to my place.” And

without another word, she turned off and walked away in the sunshine, with her statuesque head erect as the head of some savage queen.

It was sometime before Noel could calm himself sufficiently to face the group that was advancing toward him.

It was Bessie Arbuthnot who first steadied him with the sound of her sweet voice.

"We want you, Mr. Craigmiles. Jarl is going to show us a wonder of a cave. Where have you been hiding yourself?"

"He has been sentimentalizing with the young Egyptian person, Miss Arbuthnot," put in gay Lance Armour. "I saw him a few minutes ago."

"With whom?" asked Bessie, in innocent surprise.

"With Jarl's daughter," said Noel, quietly. "But not sentimentalizing, I can assure you. She has been telling me a story."

He could not help this slight thrust at the courtly, treacherous face smiling at Bessie's

side ; and it told, for Marc Desbro's eye turned upon him with a quick, questioning flash, and his clear skin flushed an angry, restless red.

“Craigmiles's chivalry is of the inflammable sort,” he put in, with a faint sneer in his voice. “But what about the cave? The rest are waiting for us.”

He drew the small, exquisitely-gloved hand more firmly through his arm as he spoke, and his half-sneer ended with a touch of triumph. The game was in his hands for the present, at least, and he thought he could play it out.

He did not release the hand when they reached the cave ; he held it in his as Jarl piloted them through the darkness, and once Noel saw him raise it carelessly to his lips in the graceful fashion that was natural to him. The touch of carelessness that sometimes showed itself was lost in a mood even more fascinating than usual. Always brilliant and a favorite, this evening he exerted himself to perfection, and pretty Bessie

came back to the shore with a soft tint of happy rose on her cheek, and a tender brightness in her brown eyes.

They were somewhat in advance of the remainder of the party when they returned to the boats, and glancing up, Bessie saw the girl Cleo seated silently in her old place, just as she had been seated before, her strange, handsome face turned seaward, a sort of steady calm making her seem almost weird in her quiet. She did not move even when they took their seats, laughing and chattering; and it was not until Bessie had spoken to her that she appeared to know that they were near her.

"I am afraid you are tired of waiting," said Bessie's sweet, cultivated voice. The girl turned toward them, and Bessie almost started.

The rich, olive-tinted skin had faded to a dead, rigid pallor, the sombre eyes were steadily expressionless, while the face was a stony blank.

"How pale you are," said Bessie, gently.

"You look as if you were ill. Pray have my seat, and let this gentleman take your oars."

"No," she said briefly. "I am quite well, at least I am used to it; and it did not matter," and without another word she averted her face again. She held her place, just with the same defiant immobility until they reached home, rowing steadily without a word or look at them.

The sun was dipping redly into the waves when they arrived at their journey's end, and as the girl drew her boat in, Noel Craigmiles saw Desbro bend over her on pretence of assisting her to secure it, and speak to her. There were only a few words said, and then the dark face was lifted, darker than ever with uncontrolled passion and bitterness.

"You'd better go," she said, fiercely. "I can do the work — *she's* waiting for you."

There was a very pretty glow in Miss Arbuthnot's delicate face that evening. Perhaps, now and then, of late, it had occurred to her that this

handsome hero of hers was a thought abstracted, or preoccupied, though she had not attempted to account for it. But this day had been such a happy one, that even these faint shadows were forgotten. Capt. Marc hovered around her with the tenderest of faces — was so lover-like, indeed, that Mrs. Penryth, smiling softly to herself, began to romance over the days to come on an unlimited scale, and mentally arranged such a wedding as Penrydden had never heard of.

She was seated in her comfortable easy-chair, alternately knitting and casting benign glances at a group round the bagatelle-table, when she was somewhat surprised by the touch of a hand laid gently upon her arm, and turning her head, she met the grave, troubled face of her husband.

“Annie,” he said, in a low voice, “if you can leave the room without attracting attention, I should like you to come into the library.”

All the old lady's visions faded into astonishment. A love of the mysterious had never been

one of the weaknesses of her better-half, and his serious face startled her ; so, holding her knitting in her hand, she followed him quietly at once.

The hall and stair-case were lighted brilliantly, but the library was in darkness, and entering the open door, she dimly saw her husband standing at the table, evidently watching the moonlit grounds intently.

“Why, Martin !” she began, when he turned upon her, and stopped her.

“My dear,” he said, “come to the window.”

The tone of his voice excited her strangely, and she laid her hand upon his shoulder, anxiously asking him what was the matter.

“I want you to convince me that my eyes are not deceiving me,” he answered. “Near the elm-trees there is a woman standing in a strip of moonlight — who is it ?”

The moon had lighted the grounds perfectly, and one glance showed Mrs. Penryth a figure wearing a scarlet cloak, and leaning against a tree.

"It is Jarl's daughter!" she exclaimed, surprisedly. "What can she be waiting for!"

"Say '*who* is she waiting for!'" was his reply. "She was there last night; she was there the night before. I have been watching her for nearly a month."

"Martin," she began, falteringly. "Surely — surely —"

He interrupted her again.

"I have been watching her for weeks," he said. "There is a man in the house who is a patron of her father's. Three weeks ago I met the girl with him on the beach, and since then I have watched them constantly. I have seen them together a dozen times since. Last night I saw them part at that very tree, and he kissed her. Can you guess the man's name?"

"Martin —" in the same faltering tone, "you said 'a patron of Jarl's' — not Marc Desbro, Martin, for my pretty Bessie's sake. Say it is not Marc Desbro!"

His reply came upon her like a blow.

"It is Marc Desbro."

If the story had been painful to Noel Craigmiles, it was terrible to the affectionate, motherly woman to whom Bessie Arbuthnot was almost the dearest creature on earth.

"I cannot believe it!" she broke forth. "I cannot, cannot believe it! There must be some mistake."

He pointed to the silent figure in the moonlight, and as he pointed, another form suddenly showed itself crossing the lawn, and at the first sight of it Mrs. Penryth broke into an exclamation.

"Am I right?" asked her husband. "Do you recognize him?"

The game of bagatelle was over when the host and hostess returned to the parlor, and Bessie was standing at the head of the table, chatting merrily as she idly knocked the balls about with her cue. Some croquet enthusiast had been proposing a moonlight game, and they were discuss-

ing it. As the door opened, Lance Armour, who was industriously flirting with three of the prettiest girls at once, turned suddenly round.

"Where is Desbro?" he exclaimed. "We want him, you know. Craigmiles, I thought I saw him talking to you a few minutes ago."

Bessie raised her eyes in a faint surprise. A few minutes before he had certainly spoken to her, and she had imagined him still in the room.

"He was here a moment since," she said, smiling. "I did not see him leave the room by the door. He must have vanished into thin air."

"He did not pass out through the door," said Mrs. Bayless, an interesting widow. "I saw him look at his watch, and step out of the low window behind you. Probably he had an engagement." (The interesting widow had a little womanish spite against Miss Arbuthnot, and liked to "thaw her a little," as she put it.)

But secure in the recollection of her afternoon, Bessie laid down her cue, smiling.

“Then we must play without him,” she said.
“Who is ready?”

They were all ready, they said, and so the players departed in couples, one or two of the most coquettishly inclined young ladies knotting bewitching little webs of lace handkerchiefs under their pretty chins, in a style which was, to say the least of it, tantalizing in the extreme.

The night was beautiful, and the croquet-players enthusiastic, so, in the excitement of the game, Capt. Marc was forgotten by all for the time being. But when the final victorious stroke was made, and most of the party had returned to the parlors once more, Bessie, as she sauntered through the deserted grounds with Noel Craig-miles, found herself wondering faintly at her lover's absence.

They had been talking gayly as they promenaded, but at last a silence had fallen upon them almost unconsciously. Perhaps the thoughts of both had wandered in the same track, but Craig-

miles was thinking of the dark, defiant eyes, in their fierce bitterness, while Bessie remembered only the echo of the tender promise she had renewed that happy evening on the sunlit, dancing sea.

Neither had spoken for some moments, when turning into a shaded avenue, Bessie suddenly stopped, holding her escort back.

"I thought I heard voices," she said, laughing a little. "I was sure I heard some one speaking among the trees," she added, reticent of saying how quickly she had recognized one voice at least.

But the next moment her laugh died away, and she looked up at Noel's pale face with a sudden questioning glance, for the voice had raised itself, and came to them with terrible distinctness from the next path.

"It is impossible. You know I could not risk leaving her, without notice, Cleo. Be reasonable, for heaven's sake! You have not even told me what you want me for."

One terrible, breathless moment, and then Noel Craigmiles' heart grew horribly cold as he realized his position. The voice was Marc Desbro's, and the girl who loved him, and was his promised wife, had recognized it. Bessie stood silent, not moving, only holding to his arm with a strength of which he could not have believed her slender fingers capable. In a moment, another voice came to them, even clearer and more distinct in its hurried passion than the first had been.

"What did I want you for?" flinging the words out with a sound that rung on the still night air. "What did you want *me* for? Why didn't you leave me alone? I could have dragged out my life like the rest of 'em." She was fairly panting and gasping. "You called me a queen, then—a queen! I'm less than the dead leaves you tramp on now. I found out to-day—you are going to marry *her*. I am to be scorned and shunned when she's your wife. There—that's what I want you for!"

Noel glanced down at the delicate face on which the moonlight struck whitely—it was icily, coldly calm, and immobile as marble. Bessie was looking at the pretty hand that lay upon his arm, and he felt she only saw the great, sparkling emerald on the slender fore-finger—the engagement-ring—but she was listening steadily.

The girl went on, a sudden wild change breaking her passion into terrified despair, and it seemed as though she was wringing her hands.

“You said I was handsomer than her—so I am. I know I am, but I never cared until you told me so. Don’t send me away—” The sound of her voice told that she had slipped to the earth, and lay groveling at his feet. “Let me go with you—let me follow you—let me be your servant—I’m used to it. If she’s your wife, I’ll be her servant, too. I only want to be near you.”

“Listen to me,” said Desbro’s voice. “Cleo, get up. I have been a mad fool, and I must put a stop to this.”

To Craigmiles it was a terrible five minutes that followed, as he waited, held, against his will, by the relentless, girlish hand. It was evident that Bessie meant to spare herself nothing, and so she remained, until she had heard the truth to its shameful, bitter end.

For three months this man had deliberately deceived and insulted her in the face of her trust and love; and now icily and steadily she listened, for she was hearing the solution of the neglect her tender, girlish heart had so readily forgiven. The blow was a terrible one; her belief in the world, that had seemed so fair, was crushed and broken forever and ever; but it was not a blow that would kill her. She was too proud and high-bred to be blighted by the stereotyped broken heart. She would live over it. She could never believe, as she had believed an hour ago; never trust as she had trusted; never dream as she had dreamed; but she would live; and face life bravely, nevertheless.

At last the voices ceased.

“Go back quietly, like a good girl,” Marc Desbro had said, “and I will come to you to-morrow.” And they had seen the girl pass the end of the avenue with an excited swiftness; and after a moment’s waiting, Desbro’s feet sounded on the gravel-walk, and Bessie, loosening her grasp on Craigmiles’ arm, spoke to him for the first time.

“May I ask a favor from you?” she said, in a clear, quick voice. “I think you are my friend—if I have a friend in the world,” with faint bitterness.

“What can I do for you?” he asked, trying to speak quietly.

“I wish to meet Capt. Desbro as he comes up the avenue. Will you walk with me toward him, and stay with me until I have spoken a dozen words to him?”

She was pale to the lips. He acquiesced with an inclination of his head.

The advancing feet were coming to the turn in

the path now, and a few steps, a very few, brought them face to face in the fair moonlight with Marc Desbro.

Something very like an oath broke from the gallant captain's lips at his first glance at the fair, haughty face of his Nemesis, and for a breath's space there was a dead silence. Then the emerald ring was slipped from Miss Arbuthnot's finger, and the white hand extended without a tremor.

"You will understand me, Capt. Desbro," she said, with icy distinctness. "Let me thank you for opening my eyes to my humiliation, however unconsciously. You have insulted me, but I have never given you the right to despise me. Good-evening."

And before he had time to utter a word, he was standing alone, holding the emerald in his palm, staring at it in blind, impotent rage.

Until they reached the house, Noel did not even dare to look at his companion; but when

the light of the great hall lamp fell upon her face, her deathly paleness was something terrible to see, and he spoke in spite of himself.

“Let me go to Mrs. Penryth,” he said. “I am afraid this has been too much for you, Miss Arbuthnot.”

Her hand went to her side with an unconsciousness that said worlds, but her eyes met his glance freer from tears than his own.

“No; thank you,” she answered. “I should rather be alone. If Mrs. Penryth asks for me, pray tell her I am unwell, and shall not come down stairs again. Good-night.”

He watched her as she crossed the hall with a vague, stricken wonder as to how all this would end; he watched her as she passed up the staircase, until he could see her no longer, and then he walked back to the open hall-door and out on to the long veranda.

Even in the few minutes since their walk from the avenue, a great, dull cloud had swept up

from the sea and darkened the moonlight, and as he stepped out into the air, a low, sullen moan crept over the waste of shore.

He stood there a moment listening to it, and then turned restlessly into the house again.

"It sounds like a banshee," he said. "We shall have a storm to-night."

As she entered her chamber, the same sound had greeted Bessie Arbuthnot, but to her it boded nothing. As she locked the door, she was thinking only of one thing, looking one truth sternly and steadily in the face. All was over! All was over! That was what she said to herself again and again. She said it as she lighted a taper and opened her desk; she said it as she took her once precious letters out and laid them together.

Her face burnt like flame when she touched them. She wanted to be free of them and her humiliation. How he had insulted her — she a lady, and proud as the proudest in the land! How he had dragged her in the dust and tram-

pled upon her heart! She was wild with shame and humiliation now, but she felt as if the first fierce sting over she should turn to ice.

She made the letters into a package, laid them away in her desk, and shut the lid. Then she went to the open window and knelt down.

She knelt there for an hour, for two hours, watching the heavy clouds roll up, and listening to the rising wind as it moaned across the sand. She hardly knew how the time passed. Afterwards, when all was over, she often wondered if some terrible change had not come upon her, forcing her innocent, happy girlhood far behind, as she knelt there, glancing now and then at the clenched, white hand, on which the jeweled ring had so lately shone.

It required an effort to enter the breakfast-parlor calmly the next morning. In the long hours Bessie had lain awake listening to the raging storm that lashed the waves upon the beach; she had felt an excited fear of the ordeal, and as

she dressed before the mirror, she wondered that there was so little change in her fair face. It was calm enough, as calm as it had ever been, but for the faint touch of a new expression that, perhaps, made it seem a thought colder.

Her color heightened a little as she opened the breakfast-room door, for Marc Desbro was standing at the window, and at the sound of her entrance turned quickly. He was pale as death, and there was a look in his eyes, which was almost like horror.

“Oh, Miss Arbuthnot!” exclaimed the pretty widow, excitedly.

“Oh, Bessie, my dear!” broke in Mrs. Penryth, with a colorless face, and then, with a new feeling, the girl noticed awe-stricken countenances all around her, and stopped.

“There has been a terrible accident,” said old Mr. Penryth, his voice sounding almost sternly. “That daughter of Jarl’s—you know her, Bessie—they found her on the beach this morning, poor girl——”

"Not—not dead?" Bessie interrupted, in a sharp whisper.

It seemed as if he dared not answer her, or could not, and Noel Craigmiles took up the story, his eyes bent upon the floor.

"There was a storm last night," he spoke in a low voice, "and the girl was seen to round the Point, on her way home, at a late hour. It is supposed she had been out secretly, for she was alone, and the storm must have overtaken her. The boat was swamped, and her body came ashore with the tide."

And so it was. Fate had ended the drama at a stroke, and in one of her good old friends' rooms, the beautiful, wronged creature lay dead.

A few hours later Bessie went into the darkened chamber. The coarse, rough dress had been changed for a pretty, girlish wrapper; the splendid hair fell loose upon the white pillow; the hands were folded in the old, old fashion, upon her stilled heart. But the dark, handsome

face was steady, even then, in its old statuesque fixedness of passionate despair.

There was only one thing to be done, Bessie felt, when she closed the door, and left the dead girl to the stillness. She recalled the letters upstairs.

She went and got them at once, and bringing them down, found Marc Desbro in the parlor alone. She scarcely glanced at him, as she laid the package on the table, at his side.

"These are your letters," she said, simply, and turned to go.

But he did not intend to lose his prize without an effort. He followed her quickly, overtook her, and looking down into her fair, haughty face, his handsome, treacherous eyes aglow, whispered,

"Bessie, Bessie, is this to be the end?"

The last throes of her dead love for him stained her white skin with scarlet, as she drew back with a faint gesture of contempt, a contempt

which even the kindest-hearted woman will sometimes show, unconsciously.

"The end!" she echoed, in her clear, haughty voice. "Capt. Desbro, I am a woman." And not deigning to glance backward, she passed him, as if he had been a stone.

She told Mrs. Penryth the whole story that night, when Marc Desbro had left them.

They were sitting alone by the fire when Bessie held out her slender, ringless hand, that her friend might see it.

"Can you guess what it means?" she began, with a faint, bitter smile. But the next moment she faltered under the kindly, pitying eyes, and broke down into the first tears she had shed.

"Don't say you are sorry for me," she exclaimed passionately. "It is an old story, I dare say, and I have only suffered as other women suffer. I shall live it down, you know; but I must go away, Mrs. Penryth. I must go back to London, and try to forget it."

A week later, the party at Penrydden was broken up, for when Miss Arbuthnot returned to London, the remainder of the guests followed, one by one. For several months society waited for the wedding, and for a year wondered what Capt. Desbro had done to deserve banishment; but to this day no one has guessed the real truth.

Bessie Arbuthnot has lived three years since then, and at twenty-two her sweet face wins her a reputation greater than ever.

"There is not much chance for fellows like us, though," said a philosophical adorer, the other day. "Craigmiles is the lucky man, if there is one."

And, perhaps he was right, for on her last visit to Penrydden, Bessie spoke of her old adorer to Mrs. Penryth.

"I am not romantic, now," she said, "and I have quite outlived the old love. I am not unhappy, and I am going to marry the only man I honestly respect: that man is Noel Craigmiles."

THE MEN WHO LOVED ELIZABETH.

BY MRS. FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.



“OH!” cried Elizabeth, “what a miserable day it is! What a wretched day! How wretched the whole world is! How can any one ever be happy!” She said it under her breath, making a little gesture, as if she would have wrung her hands, if she had dared, and hurrying along the deserted road in a blind, desperate fashion, scarcely noting where she was going.

It had been a wretched day for her, in truth. She had done this dull, chill afternoon, what she could never undo; and though, just now, she told herself that she did not wish to undo anything, and had only acted with reasonable pride and self-respect, the consequences to her reasonable pride went rather hard with her.

“Lissie,” her lover had said, ten minutes before, when she held out to him her ring — the ring she had only worn three months. “Darling, think one minute.”

“Think!” she cried, pale with proud wrath, “I have thought too long. I will marry no man whose friends say he stoops to me. I would not make such a marriage for worlds — for worlds upon worlds.”

Capt. Max caught her unwilling hands, and held them, his handsome young face aglow.

“Not for love’s sake?” he said. “Not when the man would rather lose the world than you? You might forgive them for love’s sake.”

But Elizabeth was as proud as she was poor. If she had been more fortunate she might have been less stubborn and lofty; if she had been an heiress, and a lily of the field, she might even have been charmingly humble; but, as old Miss Tipton’s companion, she was an indomitable creature, indeed. Was she not a lady? Were

these people, who sneered at her poverty, and accused her of trying to play her cards well, better born, or more highly cultivated than she herself was? Was not she Elizabeth Fabien, ten times as handsome, and twenty times more brilliant than those thin, vapid sisters, and their cold, vapid, old mother? She was in no mood to listen to reason; she refused to be touched by any appeal; she was, indeed, so obstinate, and fierce, and scornful, that it was small wonder that appeal became reproach, and reproach accusation, and accusation anger; and the end of it all was a hot, indignant quarrel, and a bitter, desperate parting; and here she was going back over the lonely road again, and the captain was half way home, his pulses throbbing, and his heart on fire.

“It is all over!” he groaned, tempestuously. “It’s all over! And I never loved any living creature as I love her. And it is all the fault of those women. Commend me to a man’s woman-kind for making him wretched, if their taste runs

in that direction. Now Louise and Marie will rest in peace, and my mother will feel that she has nothing to complain of."

And, on her side, Elizabeth went her way, feeling sad enough. Life had bloomed out suddenly for her six months ago, when, dining out with her patroness, she had found herself taken down to the table by a stalwart, cheerful cavalier, who was unworldly enough to see only her youth and beauty, and admire them as honestly as if she had been the most important young person in the room, instead of the most insignificant. On that occasion, Capt. Max had succumbed to Fate, and fallen in love with her, and had been so much in earnest that he had even cultivated Miss Tipton, and struggled with unremitted ardor to render himself worthy in her eyes to be invited to tea; and from accidental meetings they had advanced to trysts: and three months after he and Elizabeth found themselves engaged.

But here was the end of it! Elizabeth clenched

her ringless hand, when she drew in sight of Miss Tipton's great, brick house, and rambling garden. The tall, gallant figure would never saunter up the gravel-walk again, and make her heart leap with joy; the tinkling old piano would only play hymns for Miss Tipton; there would be no more accompaniments to the gay, clear voice. It would be better to die at once than live and miss the secret bliss she had known in this brief summer.

She heard Miss Tipton talking to a visitor when she entered the hall, and she recognized familiar tones with a feeling of wild impatience. She slipped by the parlor-door lightly, hoping to escape notice, but at the head of the stair-case a servant met her with a message.

"Miss Tipton told me to tell you, when you came in, that Mr. Gregory Renfrew is with her. She wishes you to come to them in the parlor."

"Very well," said Elizabeth, hopelessly.

She went to her room, and took off her hat.

It was a black hat, with a scarlet poppy in it; and Capt. Max had admired it, with his customary lover-like extravagance. He had admired her dress, too; and they had had a laugh at Miss Tipton's disapproval of it. It was an old, black, velvet gown of Elizabeth's dead mother, which she had made over into a walking-suit with much contriving, and Miss Tipton had shaken her head on seeing it.

"It is a dress hardly befitting your position, Elizabeth," she had remarked. "But," as if deriving consolation from the fact, "it is somewhat shabby, it is true. That is one thing. One can see it has been made over."

So even the picturesque shabbiness of her dress reminded the girl of her lover. Now that no one could see her, she wrung her hands in earnest.

"Why could not Gregory Renfrew stay at home?" she said. "To-day of all days. Am I to have no rest?"

There was anger as well as misery in her

mood. She always knew what Mr. Gregory Renfrew came for; and as he came nearly every day, she found him monotonous at best. At the worst, she found him rasping to her nerves, and rather apt to rouse her temper. His object in visiting the house was the same one as Capt. Max's had been. He came because he was hopelessly in love with her, and could not stay away. But she could not excuse him as she had excused Capt. Max. If he had not been so gentle, so unobtrusive, and so earnest, she would have almost hated him a little.

When she opened the parlor-door, he rose to greet her. He was a pale, little man, with a thin, insignificant figure, an expression between a patient humor and sadness, and with no attractive outward attribute but well-fitting clothes. He had a long, thin, fair mustache, and a bad habit of continually twisting it; and he was twisting it in his most nervous manner when he advanced to meet Elizabeth.

“Mr. Renfrew has been waiting here an hour, Elizabeth,” said Miss Tipton, rebukingly.

“Waiting?” said Elizabeth. What right had he to wait for her, as if he had a claim upon her? She gave him a coldly impatient glance, from under her sweeping lashes. “It is a great pity,” she added.

Renfrew met this glance with his customary long-suffering smile.

“I have been admiring your chrysanthemums,” he said, meekly. And Miss Tipton has been good enough to promise me a bouquet. My flowers do not flourish as yours do, Miss Elizabeth. My chrysanthemums look mouldy at this time of the year.”

“They wouldn’t if your gardener understood them,” commented Elizabeth; and then she turned to her patroness, bent upon showing that it was because she was obliged to obey others that he would get his chrysanthemums, and not because she anticipated any enjoyment of a senti-

mental stroll in the dismal garden. "Must I go and gather the flowers now?" she asked.

"Yes," said Miss Tipton, with a displeased glance over her spectacles. She disapproved of Elizabeth's tendency to repulse this suitor, on the same ground that she disapproved of her beauty, and her furbished up velvet gown, as "unbefitting her station." With the wisdom of three-score years, she could not see why, "a young person," utterly destitute of prospects, should not be grateful for the attentions of a man, who had a large income, a successful business, the handsomest house and grounds in the neighborhood, and no incumbrances whatever.

But Elizabeth was too young to be discreet. She was young enough to be even a little cruel in her scorn of such advantages. She took her flower-scissors from their place, and left the room, almost ignoring the fact that Renfrew was following her. He always followed her, when Miss Tipton gave him an opportunity.

It was dismal enough outside. A chill wind was whistling through the trees in a ghostly way, and tossing the dead leaves in heaps in corners of the gravel-walks. Only the chrysanthemums, and a few late flowers, showed their scant bloom. It was damp under foot, and gray overhead. But the desolate chilliness was only in accordance with poor Elizabeth's heartache. She bent over a flower-bed, and began to snip the blossoms off with her scissors, while her companion stood at her side and watched her. He was not as stupid as she fancied. If she had looked up at him, she would have learned as much. Gradually, as he watched her, a singularly tender expression revealed itself in his meagre face; and by-and-by his hand stole up to his mustache, and began the nervous stroking. But for several minutes he did not speak. At length, however, a stray, red leaf, carried by a little gust of wind, fell upon Elizabeth's black braids, and lifting her head in a petulant gesture, she saw something that disturbed her.

She stood upright before him, her white chrysanthemums held loosely in the folds of her black dress, and, unwittingly, her eyes questioned him as openly as if she had spoken. And so he answered her. Before he had come into the garden, he had wondered how he should begin. But now it seemed the most natural thing in the world that he should speak out, as he had been on the verge of doing a hundred times before.

“Elizabeth,” he said, “I have been thinking to-day of some lines I chanced upon last night.

‘He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who fears to put it to the touch,
And win or lose it all.’

I—I came out here, Elizabeth, to put my fate to the touch, and win or lose all.”

Elizabeth neither spoke nor stirred. Because this had come this afternoon, it was harder to bear than it would have been at any other time. It was a kind of shock to her. She had known he would say foolish things, as she called them,

but she had not expected he would dare so much as this. And then, too, she found that, all at once, his whole aspect had altered somehow. It was almost as if he had gained strength and manliness. At this moment he did not look afraid of her, or exactly insignificant.

“I love you, Elizabeth,” he said, with simple directness.

Elizabeth was conscious of a suddenly sharp pain. She had used to think that when he said this to her, she would be angry, and now she did not feel angry at all, only puzzled and sad.

“Oh, no!” she cried. “Don’t, don’t say that!”

“But I must say it,” he answered, in a voice shaken with his deep emotion. “I must say it, though I have been so often convinced that it would be of no use. A man cannot love a woman, as I love you, and not tell her so, even — even if he despairs, as I do, Elizabeth.” And his hands falling at his sides, he stood looking at her, in passionate misery. “I have loved you a long

time," he said; "from the first. And, at the first, I sometimes fancied that I might win you; but of late my hope has died out, and to-day it is my despair that speaks. It is impossible that you could love, is it not, Elizabeth?"

"Yes, it is impossible," said Elizabeth. It could never be!"

She did not mean to be cruel to him; but, remembering Max, and her last summer, she forgot that her tone might sound vehement, in its earnestness of decision.

"Never!" she said. "No, never, never!"

It was a very brief love-scene. He said no more — made no further appeal. There was a silence for a few moments, and then he held out his hands for the chrysanthemums.

"Let me carry them for you," he said. "You have gathered enough. Thank you for having taken the trouble."

They went slowly back to the house, and Elizabeth, pale and disturbed, arranged his bouquet in

silence. She slipped up stairs as soon as he was gone, hoping that by tea-time Miss Tipton would have forgotten that she had any questions to ask.

She threw a shawl over her shoulders, and crouched down upon the floor, in a corner of the deep window. She always took possession of this corner when she was either miserable or very happy; and this afternoon surely her mood was desolate enough. But the truth was, she did not realize what she had done.

In the first glow of her anger she had been sure of herself; but when she became cooler, her heart would fail her. It was a girl's heart, warm with young romance, and it would be hard to conquer.

There had been a great deal of opposition to her engagement. If he had trifled with her, or treated her with falsehood and cruelty, Capt. Max Desmond's relatives would have found it easy to forgive and excuse him; but for his folly in engaging himself to a vain young woman, who had nothing to bring him but her vanity and her

great eyes, they had no excuse. It was a madness not to be palliated; and they were determined that it should not be consummated easily. So, from the first, Elizabeth had found her lot a hard one. Her proud spirit could not brook it. She was slighted, and ignored, and worse than all, accused of having played desperately for high stakes. She had maneuvered, and had been by no means too delicate, her enemies managed to insinuate. If they had dared to call her openly a bold and dangerous creature, they would have done it; but not daring so much openly, they went as far as they might. They gave their friends to understand that Capt. Max was a victim; and as they made no secret of their sentiments, Elizabeth soon discovered what her future position among them would be, and at last was goaded to this madness of sacrificing her love for the sake of her pride.

As she sat, crouching in the cold, her fate looked so hard, that she grew rebellious.

“Everything is against me,” she said, with a sob. “Everything is always against me. Since it was to end like this, why need I ever have seen him? I had enough to bear before.”

She laid her head upon the window-ledge, and cried, in an unrestrained, impetuous fashion. She felt even bitter against Max, because — because — well, she did not know exactly why. She only felt, tempestuously, that she had been wronged and robbed of her happiness.

When she went down to pour out Miss Tipton’s tea, the old lady looked at her querulously.

“Your eyes are red, Elizabeth,” she said. “Your temper has been getting the better of you, as usual.”

“It is the wind,” answered Elizabeth, rather haughtily. “One cannot stand in the wind for half an hour without feeling the effects of it. It is wretched outside.”

“Tut, tut! That is nonsense!” taking off her spectacles. “What was Gregory Renfrew saying to you?”

Elizabeth sat down at the table, and put a lump of sugar into a teacup, feeling stormy and obstinate.

“He was saying that his chrysanthemums were mouldy—”

“Tut, tut!” again. “He is a foolish fellow, and you are a foolish girl. You had better let him speak, and you had better listen to him than to that big, stupid Desmond. You are wasting your time. He has no backbone, that Desmond, or he would make those ridiculous women hold their tongues. They are always abusing you, and sneering at you. You are not as proud as your mother was, Elizabeth.”

Elizabeth's eyes flashed, and she pressed her lips together. Here was a new sting, and it cleared the way for new bitterness. Her feeling of resentment against her lover began to take a more tangible form. Yes, it was true. He ought to have been strong enough to defend her against three vapid women. He ought to have known

how to crush out their venom at the outset. He had shown himself weak. Even this garrulous old woman had detected his faultiness, and could condemn it. Meaningly or unmeaningly, Miss Tipton had sown a dragon's tooth.

Elizabeth had fancied that, having learned his fate, Renfrew would remain at home; but she found herself wrong. After an absence of a week, he began to come again as faithfully as ever. He developed a pathetic fondness for Miss Tipton's society. They played cards together, and talked endlessly about their mutual household difficulties, while Elizabeth sat apart and worked at a hideous cushion for her patroness, who was interested in a peculiarly purposeless fancy fair. The girl used to listen to their conversations, and feel scornful. But one night, as she was listening, she received a dreadful stab.

"The Chesworths have come," remarked Gregory. "They are with the Desmonds—Doris and all."

“Doris?” said Miss Tipton. “One may easily guess what that means. The Desmonds have had their eye upon Doris since she was a child. They intend that she shall marry Max. The money which her grandmother left her is too nice a dot to go out of the family.”

Elizabeth began to work very fast. Her heart beat fiercely, and her cheeks flamed. But Gregory Renfrew answered undisturbedly. Being the man he was, he rarely heard either news or scandal, and, for reasons of her own, Miss Tipton had not chosen to tell him of Elizabeth’s engagement. The Desmond women he disliked so intensely, that he avoided them as he would have done a plague. Accordingly, they had not had the opportunity to give him their version of their brother’s story.

“Doris is a handsome creature,” he said, “and a charming girl. The very girl to make Max the best of wives. I know what order of woman Max needs. He is a good fellow, a good, gener-

ous fellow, and he should marry well. He will, too. I should think few women would refuse him ;” not looking at Elizabeth, but smiling with his characteristic sad patience. “I went to school with him,” he added, “and he was always lucky.”

Elizabeth laid down her work, and left the room on pretence of going for fresh silk. She ran up the stairs rapidly, blinded with tears.

“Oh !” was her resentful cry. “He might have waited a little longer. It is very soon to begin again. It must be his fault. He had no need to stay if he did not want to see the girl. *I* would have gone away the hour she came, if I had been in his place. He must know about their plans. He does know, and he likes them.”

She was so desperate, that she even descended to the poor little trick of using Gregory Renfrew as a means of gratifying her curiosity. She went back to the parlor again, and inveigling him away from Miss Tipton, drew him to her own side, and

led him into an artful conversation. She made him talk to her about Capt. Max and the Chesworths. She wanted to know about this Doris; she must know about her. Was she such a beauty? How old was she? What was her style? What was this about her money?

Gregory answered her questions innocently enough, at first, but at length some false note in her voice betrayed her feverish eagerness, and he looked at her in sad amazement. Her cheeks were hot, her hands were trembling; she was making blunders in her work. A suspicion of the truth began to reveal itself to him slowly. What a mistake he had made! How blind he had been, not to guess at this before! Through some odd chance, he had never met Max at the house, but he had known that he came there. And was it not natural that he should have come there with a purpose? And being so genial and handsome a fellow, was it not natural that he should have been successful?

“Did I understand Miss Tipton to say that Capt. Desmond was engaged to Miss Doris Chesworth?” Elizabeth faltered, weakly.

“No,” he answered, still regarding her downcast face with sorrowful eyes. “No, Elizabeth.”

“But,” she persisted, “isn’t he, isn’t there a sort of understanding; isn’t it almost the same thing?”

“No,” with an honest courage that did him credit, under the circumstances. “I do not think so. The two families would approve of the match it is said. That is all.”

But Elizabeth would not let herself believe him. Here was still another grievance for her, and she was unreasonable enough to seize hold upon it. Then she made up her mind to see Doris Chesworth and her lover together, and judge for herself. All the week she kept her eyes upon the road, and once or twice was rewarded by the sight of the Desmond carriage driving by, with the feminine members of the household, and their

guests; but she did not see Max until Sunday. On Sunday morning she got up feeling feverish and miserable. Looking in the glass, the sight of her own face startled her. She was pale, and even haggard.

“I will go to church, this morning, and see them,” she said. “But they shall not see me. How dreadfully I look! I am like a hideous old maid. I am not Elizabeth Fabien at all.”

She went to the church the Desmond family attended, and took her place in a dark, high pew, near the door. Just before the beginning of the service, the door opened, and there entered first her enemies, and then her lover, with a companion. It was Doris Chesworth, of course, and she was even a greater beauty than Elizabeth had feared. The girl’s heart burned within her, as the fair face passed her shadowy corner. She watched the two all the morning, and was filled with bitter, jealous pangs. She had thought to try to leave the church without being seen, but

as they were passing her on their way out, a sudden temptation assailed her, and she gave way to it. She emerged from the darkness just as Max neared her, and the next instant his glance fell upon her pale, scornful face. Its bitterness was so full of accusation, that it cut him to the quick. Under cover of the morning crowd, he caught her hand, and fairly crushed it.

“Elizabeth,” he whispered, in impassioned appeal. “Elizabeth!”

But she dragged her hand away, and darting one cruel glance at him, forced her way past.

She appeared before Miss Tipton, like a ghost, at dinner. She had tortured herself beyond endurance.

“Who preached?” asked the old lady. “What was the text?”

“I did not see who preached,” said Elizabeth, with the indifferent daring of cold despair. “I did not hear the text. I know nothing about it.”

How she suffered during the next two months!

She gave herself up entirely to a belief in her lover's falsehood before six weeks were ended. She believed the rumors she heard, and, as usual, rumor was active. Perhaps the feminine Desmonds assisted it in their anxiety. Capt. Max, said the gossips, was very attentive to his mother's guest. He was to be seen with her upon all occasions. It would be an excellent match. Sometimes the visitors, who said these things, glanced aside at Elizabeth, who bent over her work in cold silence. The time came at last when the sword fell. A caller came one morning who had heard of a positive engagement. Mrs. Desmond had announced it to a select few. That night Gregory Renfrew came, and found Elizabeth in a strange mood, a dreadful mood. She cared for nothing any longer, and so she was not afraid to ask what she wished to know.

"Is it true that Capt. Desmond is engaged to Doris Chesworth?" she demanded.

Her face was like stone, white and hard.

Gregory hesitated at the sight of it; but he had heard the story, too, and was obliged to speak.

“I am not sure,” he faltered. “One hears so many things.”

“Yes, you are sure,” said Elizabeth. “You know it is true. He is going to marry her. And he was engaged to me three months ago.”

Gregory started. He had not fancied that she would ever tell him this. But she went on with grim hauteur of manner.

“It is very soon to be engaged again,” she said. “It is very soon. He might have waited. But then, perhaps, he has forgotten that he ever was engaged before. Men like him soon forget; and I am not like Doris Chesworth. I am only Elizabeth, and he was afraid of those women.”

She spent an hour kneeling by her window that night. She had never felt so utterly desolate since the night her mother had died, and left her standing alone in the world. It was as if death had come again. Three months ago, when she

had been so obstinate and defiant, her lover had clung to her passionately; but she had thrust his love aside, and now she had lost it forever. She began to see that she had never realized that she could quite lose it. Her pride had been a very craven pride, after all, and had not meant all it had prompted her to say.

“I was the weak one,” she cried, fiercely, and in an inconsistent changefulness. “It was I who was afraid of those women. Why did I not let him love me? Make him love me? I could have done it. I held him against the world.”

She made a dozen mad plans. She would not stay, and be obliged to face that girl as his wife. She would not stay to embroider cushions, and be stared at when people came to the house. She had a little money, and she would go away. She could get another situation somewhere, where nobody would know her.

So she electrified Miss Tipton the next morning by telling her that she must provide herself

with another companion. Miss Tipton stared at her, and frowned.

“Nonsense!” she said. “You are in one of your moods, Elizabeth. I hope you are not such a simpleton as to run away, because ——”

But a dangerous look in the handsome black eyes checked her. Elizabeth’s head raised itself, and her delicate nostrils dilated.

“Because what?” she demanded.

“Tut, tut!” quavered Miss Tipton. “It is all girl’s nonsense.”

But whether it was nonsense, or not, Elizabeth began to pack her trunks. She did not know enough of the world to feel afraid of it. She had never learned that a handsome, friendless young woman, who deserts her only acquaintances, is in a difficult position.

“Don’t be angry with me for telling you that I think you are doing an unwise thing,” said Gregory Renfrew, when he heard her plan.

“I will not stay here to see those women pretend to think ——” she began, on fire.

“What will they think, if you run away?” said Gregory, interrupting her, gravely.

“I shall not know, and shall not care,” she answered; and then her eyes fell before his steady gaze. She had taken refuge behind a mean and paltry subterfuge. It was not the women she cared for; she would have defied them all. But if Max should be happy with her rival, and she should see his bliss shine in his eyes, as it had used to do a few months ago, she could not bear such a stab as that. She had a passionate fancy that it would kill her.

The morning that she went away was a wet and chilly one. Miss Tipton scolded her from the time they sat down to breakfast until she bade her good-by at the door.

“You will repent it,” she said. “It is all girl’s nonsense. I do not believe you even know where you are going to. You will repent it, as surely as you are Elizabeth Fabien.”

“I dare say I shall,” said Elizabeth.

In truth, as she looked out at the drizzling rain, she was not sure that she was not repenting already. Everything seemed so miserable, and she was never to see her lover again.

Even the people in the cars looked miserable. They were all damp and gloomy. Nobody smiled at any one else. Everybody seemed to want a whole seat, and to resent the approach of new arrivals. Elizabeth took her place, and turned mechanically to the window. Beyond the dismal little station she could see the road she had trodden the day she had parted with Max. There was the clump of trees, where they stood when she gave him the ring, and their talk ended in so fierce a quarrel. She seemed to hear his voice again, as it sounded, when he said, "Leischen, think one minute." Would it not have been better if she had listened? He loved her then, and she began to feel that love was worth a great deal to a woman.

As the train moved off, she was obliged to draw

down her veil. Her lips trembled, her face paled, and great, hot tears fell fast.

“Good-by, Max!” she whispered. “Good-by, and try to forgive me.”

She had not slept much the night before, and, after a while, the motion of the cars, and the dull prospect, wearied her. She folded her shawl against the corner of the window, and laid her head upon it. She only meant to rest; but it was not very long before her eyes closed.

“No one shall ever call me Leischen again,” she said to herself. “If another man should say ‘Liese’ to me, I should hate him. I shall be ‘Elizabeth’ after this, until the end of my days.” And, unhappy as she was, she fell asleep with the words on her lips.

She awakened with a start, and to the realization of a strange sensation. She felt herself shaken in her seat. The cars seemed to rock with the rapidity of their motion. She looked out of the window, and seeing how the fields

appeared to whiz past, was frightened. While she slept, a man had seated himself at her side, and, in her sudden fear, she spoke to him.

“How fast we are going!” she said, tremulously. “We are rocking from side to side. Something is wrong!”

As she ended, a cry broke from her lips. Two things had happened at once. She had seen the face of her companion, and there had come a fearful crash!

“Max!” she cried, and was flung heavily forward, and into his clasping arms.

There were shrieks, and wails, and groans; but she heard nothing of them after the first moment.

Stunned by the shock, she had swooned in her lover’s arms. Capt. Max held her hard and fast. Fate had been good to them both. Among dead, and dying, and maimed creatures, they had remained unhurt.

But there were stains of blood upon both, when

Desmond staggered out from among the wreck, with the girl's face resting upon his bosom. He was sick with the sights around him, but he had won his way safely out with Elizabeth.

When the girl was aroused from her insensibility, she found herself lying on the floor of the wayside station. The seats were filled with men and women, hurt to death, or with shapeless forms, reverently covered.

Desmond was standing by her, and, when she opened her eyes, he knelt at her side.

"Do you think you can stand?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered, weakly enough.

"Then lean on my shoulder, and let me try to take you into the air."

When they got outside, he led her into a quiet corner, and supporting her, made her stand still.

"Thank God!" he said. "Thank God!"

Elizabeth felt that his great frame trembled, and she began to tremble too. So he held her closer, as if he had quite forgotten that there was another woman in the world.

“The time when a man and woman who love each other have escaped death together,” he said, directly, “is not the time to stand on ceremony. I am going to answer your questions before you ask any. This morning Gregory Renfrew came and told me of the lies people have been carrying to you, and at the last moment I followed you, to make you hear me. I am not going to marry Doris Chesworth. I love no woman but you. I will marry no woman but you. And, what is more, I will not give you the opportunity to escape me again. If you will not marry me to-day, I will follow you until you do. I swear to you that I mean what I say.”

And he put his hand underneath her chin, and turning her face upward, kissed her lips. Elizabeth stood helpless. All her grandeur of mein had deserted her.

“I—I——,” she began, and ended by bursting into tears.

“Don’t cry, Leischen,” he said, with a firmness

she had never seen him exhibit before, and he kissed her again. "If you love me, there is nothing terrible in the fact that I will not give you time to drive me to despair again. Since I am determined to marry you, why may it not be to-day, as well as to-morrow?"

"To-day?" faltered Elizabeth. "I can't—I—"

"Yes, you can," he interposed. "I am on my way to the Continent, and you are going with me. I have found that delays are dangerous. Leise, darling——," with sudden passionateness. "It might have been your dear, dead face I kissed at this moment."

And, strange as it may appear, he had his way. That evening he married Miss Tipton's ex-companion, and then they went on their way together. And furious as the Desmond women were, they were compelled to resign themselves, and own that their day was past. They did not see Elizabeth again until two days after she returned, looking handsomer and more unconquerable than

ever; and then Capt. Max's affection was so apparent, that they could not persuade people into the belief that he had made a mistake, or a mesalliance. They could not understand their sister-in-law's friendship for Gregory Renfrew, but Desmond could. He had been present when Elizabeth put both her white hands into Gregory's, the night of their first interview.

"It was you who did all for me," she said. "But for you I might have been unhappy forever."

Gregory smiled. Elizabeth had not forgotten that patient smile, and yet it touched her afresh.

"When we were at school together, Desmond used to win my marbles from me," he said. "You remember what I once told you about his being a fortunate fellow. He used to win my marbles, but somehow I could never grudge him his luck."

WANTED—A YOUNG PERSON.

BY MRS. FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.

MISS ROBINA laid down her pen, and gave her work a grave look of inspection—just such a look as she had been wont to bestow upon the copy-books of the young ladies, in the good old days when “the Misses Bird’s select seminary” flourished.

“Rosalinda, my dear,” she said, “I think that will do.”

Miss Rosalinda, who was tatting in a very short-sighted manner at the other side of the table, glanced up, blandly, satisfied, as usual.

“Certainly, Robina,” she answered. “It would be very strange if it would not.”

It would have been very strange if she had thought it would not. The utterances of Miss

Robina Bird, were always, to Miss Rosalinda Bird as the utterances of an oracle. So, when her sister remarked that she thought her work would do, she was sure, without even looking at it, that it would.

“Wanted — a young person,” read Miss Robina, with dignity. “A young person, to act as companion and housekeeper to two maiden ladies. Duties varied, but light. A comfortable home, and moderate salary offered. Address Avis, General P. O.”

Miss Rosalinda nodded her head, approvingly.

“There are people who might deem it an extravagance,” said her sister, oracularly, and rather as if she had one of the persons in question in her mind’s eye, “but I hope we know best what we can, and what we cannot afford.”

“I hope we do,” echoed Miss Rosalinda.

There was a momentary pause in which Miss Robina sat up as if braced by a back-board, her aspect very politely severe, indeed; and then Miss

Rosalinda broke the silence by a meek, rather uncertain query.

“Are you—are you thinking of Mrs. MacWhister, Sister Robina?” she ventured.

“Rosalinda,” enunciated Miss Bird, “I never think of Mrs. McWhister. She is not the kind of person to be thought of advantageously under any circumstances.”

“No, indeed,” agreed Miss Rosalinda. “Of course not, Robina; but one’s mind, you know—”

Miss Bird interposed.

“One’s mind should be under control upon all occasions.

“Ye-es, indeed,” faltered Miss Rosalinda, and subsided into nervous tatting.

In the days of the select seminary, Mrs. MacWhister, be it known, had been the rival establishment. Mrs. MacWhister was the hard-faced, sharp widow of a Scotch clergyman, who had died young, having been—as a bold young person in the first class put it—“Mrs. MacWhistered

to death." Mrs. MacWhister had been even more select than the Misses Bird. She refused pupils whose parents were "in trade," and she flourished her selectness in the Misses Bird's faces. Her young ladies had been taught to regard the rival young ladies with cold disdain. They were encouraged to out-dress them at church; and once, when the bold young person in the first class was known to have referred to the rival proprietresses as "the two old Birds," she was not reprovèd. In fact, as far as it was possible for the good Miss Robina to live at the point of the knife with a fellow-being, she had so lived with Mrs. MacWhister in a majestic way.

Even after her retirement from the field, soon after the sisters had given up their school, and removed to the quiet, retired square, where they now lived, she did not outlive her scars. It was her favorite fiction, that she never condescended to bestow a thought upon her whilom enemy. Hence her momentary severity of demeanor.

And yet, singularly enough, when tea had been brought in, and she had taken her second piece of toast, she opened fire, as it were, upon her own account, thereby almost disarranging Miss Rosalinda's digestive powers.

"Poor child!" she said, with most inconsistent sternness. "Poor, broken-hearted child!"

"Poor!" exclaimed Miss Rosalinda. "Child, Robina?"

"Yes," answered Miss Robina. "I am thinking of poor little Beck Stuart."

"Oh, dear, yes!" said Miss Rosalinda. "Poor thing! Only that she was not little, Robina, but rather tall for a girl of seventeen."

"She was child enough to have been little." Miss Bird went on, shaking her head. "And the thought of her makes my blood run cold in my veins! Whatever her story has been since that bitter winter's night, there is only one person who can be called to account for it. That person's name I forbear to mention."

“It was Miss Briggs who told you about it, wasn’t it?” Miss Rosalinda suggested.

“Yes; it was Miss Briggs. She called my attention to her one day, as the young ladies filed past; and she told me she was an orphan, and Mrs. MacWhister’s niece. She taught the younger pupils; and a bitter life she had of it, they said. Poor child! And yet her proud, young spirit held her up, and she was the life of the school, with her pretty face and gay ways. For my part, though I had never seen her clearly, I was deeply interested in her; and never shall I forget the night when Isabella Briggs came into the room, crying. You were up stairs, with Miss Giggle’s work, who had the measles, and said that something dreadful had happened at Mrs. MacWhister’s, and pretty Beck Stuart had just rushed past the window, white and breathless, and without any hat on, only a shawl thrown over her arm. Isabella Briggs knew more of her than I did, and she has quite a fancy for her.”

“Quite a fancy?” sighed Miss Rosalinda. “Being so plain herself. I think we never had a muddier complexion, or a more crossed pair of eyes, in the house, than poor Miss Briggs’s; and under-teachers are not usually fortunate in their looks. She had a great weakness for pretty faces; and, besides, the girl had lent her an umbrella once, and had a kind, bright way, she said.”

“Poor child!” said Miss Robina, helping herself sternly to another piece of toast. “Poor child, indeed!”

She had barely finished speaking, before she was startled entirely out of her majesty of manner by a sound behind her, which caused her to drop her toast, and exclaim, with a little jump,

“Dear me, Mary Anne! This is really unbearable!”

The person addressed was a small maid-servant, who had been guilty of entering the room without knocking, and who, recollecting her blunder, and recognizing its enormity, stood covered with confusion.

“I beg your pardon, mem,” she stammered. “I’m always forgetting, mem. It flies out of my head, like; and, if you please, mem, there’s a young person.”

“A young person!” ejaculated Miss Robina. “I must beg of you to be more definite, Mary Anne!”

“Yes, mem,” answered Mary Anne. “If you please, mem, it’s a young person as wants to see you.”

“Miss Chickie, about the new dress, Robina,” suggested Miss Rosalinda. “Show her into the room, Mary Anne.”

Mary Anne obeyed. But it was not Miss Chickie. The “young person” was taller than Miss Chickie, and was also younger. She was a young person with a plain, black dress, and hat on, and a black veil covering her face. When she raised this veil, Miss Robina gave another little jump, and Miss Rosalinda followed her example. The face they saw was such a pretty,

young face; but such a worn young face, and such a pale and unsmiling one, that it was a touching sight to see.

“I hope I am not too late,” said the girl. “Miss Chickie ——”

“Oh, it is about the dresses, then,” put in Miss Rosalinda.

“No, madam,” was the answer. “Miss Chickie heard you mention that you intended to advertise for a young person to occupy the position of housekeeper and companion, and she was so kind as to say that she thought I might fill the place. I am the bearer of a note from her.”

“Pray, sit down,” said Miss Robina, as she took the note.

It was quite a brief epistle. Having heard her patronesses mention their want, Miss Chickie took the liberty of recommending the accompanying young person. Her name was Snowe. She was an orphan, and had lodged with Miss Chickie for some time; and her manners were

such, that Miss Chickie had become quite interested in her. She was not strong enough to sew constantly, and she was dependent upon her own exertions. Miss Chickie felt that the Misses Bird would excuse the liberty she had taken; and “remained the Misses Bird’s obliged servant, Lucretia Chickie.”

Miss Robina folded the note again.

“Very kind, indeed, of Miss Chickie,” she remarked. “Very thoughtful. This is Miss Snowe, Rosalinda, and Miss Chickie recommends her to us strongly.”

“Very kind of Miss Chickie,” echoed Rosalinda.

The girl looked up at Miss Robina, a touching eagerness on her great, gray eyes.

“Miss Chickie has been very good to me,” she faltered. “She takes a great responsibility upon her shoulders, in sending me here; but, if you would try me, I would not—I would not abuse her generous kindness, or yours.”

“I am sure you wouldn’t!” exclaimed little Miss Rosalinda, with timid enthusiasm. She saw that the gray eyes had tears in them, which seemed to have sprung there in a second.

“Rosalinda,” said Miss Bird, “of course, not.”

She was, under all her dignity, quite as soft-hearted and sentimental as her sister, but she felt bound to sustain her business-like character. So she sat down near Miss Snow, and began to ask questions.

“Rosalinda and I are no longer young,” she explained, in her most practical manner; “and we begin to need rest from small cares. We thought, if we had an amiable young person to take little responsibilities upon herself: to write our notes for us, to read to us when we are tired, and to care for us when we are not well, we should find it pleasant, and a relief; and we decided to indulge ourselves.”

“I should be willing, more than willing, to do all you wished,” said the girl. “And it would be rest for me. If you knew what rest it would be.”

Her gloved hands clasped themselves on her knee, and the look on her face scattered Miss Robina's practical coolness to the winds. She hesitated, and forgot herself.

"It was very thoughtful of Miss Chickie," she said absently; "and I think you might suit us."

"I am sure she would," murmured Miss Rosalinda.

It was not, in the end, as strictly business-like an interview as Miss Robina would have liked to make it; and she could not help a secret regret that the classical advertisement must be sacrificed; but the pale, thin, youthful face was too much for her discretion, and the result of it was, that Miss Chickie's lodger was engaged as "house-keeper and companion to two maiden ladies."

Before a month had passed, both herself and Rosalinda had become so deeply interested for Janet Snowe, that they felt it would have cost them a great deal to dispense with her. The young face, which might have been so pretty in

bloom and happiness, did not grow rounder, or less pale and sad, but it was always a sweet and patient face; and, somehow, it made itself quite dear to the two old ladies. No duty was ever forgotten; nothing was left undone, or done carelessly. Even Mary Anne's manners improved, and a certain thoughtful gentleness and gratitude made the long evenings seem very much shorter than they had been wont to seem when the two pairs of old eyes were too dim to read, or write, or sew. Ancient novel after ancient novel Janet Snowe discovered in circulating libraries, to read aloud for the delectation of Miss Rosalinda and Miss Robina, to whom modern novels were trying. Pages of Mrs. Hannah More did the Misses Bird doze gently under, and awaken, with regretful and deprecating little starts, to admire.

“I feel sure that she has an unhappy attachment, or that her friends wish her to make an uncongenial marriage,” said Miss Rosalinda. “She stands at the oriel window, and looks out just as

Angelica Ormondsby used to do, in that beautiful novel of 'The Sufferings of the Orphan,' when Lord Mortimer was separated from her by their misunderstanding."

She was very fond of standing at the window mentioned, an oriel one, with an old-fashioned seat upon it, the old ladies noticed. She often took her sewing, and sat there, watching the children playing in the square. She seemed to like to see the little creatures. Indeed, the first time Miss Rosalinda ever saw her smile, was one morning when a manly little fellow of six or seven looked up at her, and nodded, and kissed his hand.

"Do you know him?" Rosalinda asked. "He seems to know you."

The girl had apparently forgotten her presence. She turned round, with a startled face. So Rosalinda repeated her question.

"That pretty little boy," she said, "I asked you if you knew him."

“Yes,” was Janet Snowe’s answer. “I know — at least we have seen each other before.”

“What a manly fellow he is!” commented Miss Rosalinda. “I wonder how old he is. About eight, I should say.”

“Seven in March,” said the girl, with a faint glow of pleasure in her eyes. “He is very manly for his age.”

“Oh,” said Rosalinda, “you know him quite well, I suppose.” And then she nodded, and laughed at the child herself.

She saw him often enough afterward. After school-hours, in fine weather, she always saw him playing within view of their windows, and she began to observe that it was he whom Janet Snowe was watching. But this did not strike her as singular. She watched him herself, he was such a handsome child, and such an unusual sort of child — so manly and self-contained in an old-fashioned way. Sometimes he sat on a bench, and read; sometimes he played; and, several

times, when he went away, Rosalinda saw him look up at the window, as if for approval, and saw Janet Snowe press her thin little hand almost passionately to her lips, in a farewell salute.

“She is so lonely that she has learned to be fond of him,” commented the old maid; and when she told Robina, Robina was quite touched, and agreed with her that this must be the case. And she added, “Now, that winter has come, she does not see him often, and I think she is sadder. I surprised her the other day, when it was snowing. She was sitting there, looking out, and, oh, so melancholy! It made my heart ache. She feels the confinement here, I suppose.”

“Rosalinda,” said Miss Bird, one morning, at breakfast, after the letters had been brought in, “here is a letter from Isabella Briggs.”

“Dear me!” exclaimed Rosalinda. “What does she say?”

“That she is coming to town for the Christmas holidays, and will take the liberty of paying us a

visit. An old assistant of ours, my dear," to Janet, "and a most excellent young person, Miss Briggs."

"Would you call her a young person," suggested Rosalinda.

"I should not call her an old person, Rosalinda," answered Miss Robina, with dignity. "Janet, my dear, you are not looking well, this morning."

She was not, indeed — not even as well as usual. But she smiled a little as she answered.

"I do not think I am ever very well," she said. "And this is not one of my best days. It is the weather, perhaps. This deep snow keeps us all in, you know."

But lightly as she treated the matter, she did not improve as the day went on. Miss Robina thought she was feverish, and advised a saline draught. Miss Rosalinda thought she was nervous, and suggested something soothing.

"You start if the door opens," she said, "and

I can see your hands trembling. If you do not get better we must send for Dr. Floyd. Robina and I have great confidence in Dr. Floyd. He is a young man, but he has had a great deal of experience.” And then she wandered off into a dissertation upon Dr. Floyd, who had a story — or at least looked as if he had one.

“A romance, I am sure, my dear,” she said. “He is not more than thirty-two, and his hair has streaks of gray in it, and his face is so careworn and sad, as if he had had a great trouble. We are very fond of him, Robina and I, and we always send for him, though he lives quite at the other end of the city.” And she shook her head over her tatting, and sighed.

But if Janet Snowe needed something soothing in the morning, Miss Rosalinda herself needed something soothing before night. At five o’clock Miss Briggs arrived — poor Isabella Briggs — in her oft-turned merino and melancholy bonnet, and with her one shabby little trunk, looking

desolate upon the roof of a shabby cab, whose driver entered into an altercation on the subject of fare, and drove off muttering anathemas upon "ladies as was not ladies." Miss Bird was upstairs when the visitor arrived; but Miss Rosalinda met her at the door, and conducted her into the parlor, and then conducted her to her bedroom, and then conducted her back again, in a flutter of friendly feeling, and left her for a minute or so to go and bring her refreshments in the form of seed-cake and orange-wine.

It was as she was returning with these luxuries, that she received her shock. She saw Janet Snowe cross the passage, enter the door of the room in which Isabella Briggs was standing before the fire, and then she heard a cry in Isabella's voice — a little, wild, startled cry.

"Beck! Oh, Beck! Oh, my dear!"

She hurried forward, the orange-wine upsetting itself upon the seed-cake on the plate. But,

at the door she paused, held back by a feeling something akin to fear.

Poor, shabby Isabella Briggs was holding the girl in her arms, crying over her hysterically; kissing her, and then holding her away, so that she might look at her face.

“Why did you go away?” Miss Rosalinda heard her say. “It nearly broke my heart! I wanted to care for you, in your pain. My poor girl! Oh, Beck, dear! My beautiful, poor girl!”

Janet Snowe was shaking from head to foot, and seemed scarcely able to speak.

“Hush, dear! Hush!” she said. “Don’t make me break down, Bella. Don’t!” And as she said these last words, Miss Rosalinda was reminded how young she was, for she said them like an over-tried child.

Miss Rosalinda began to tremble herself. The tears came into her eyes, and she slipped into the sitting-room near, and laid the cake and wine on a table.

“She called her ‘Beck,’” she fluttered. “I will leave them to themselves. She — she called her ‘Beck!’”

She went up to her own room, and sat down to calm herself. She wondered whether she ought to tell Robina. She wondered if she could keep the secret devoutly, if she did not. She knew she could not face the two below, and not betray herself, or at least betray that she was ill at ease.

“I am afraid to think what the mystery may be,” she wept. “She called her ‘Beck!’ And what Beck did Isabella Briggs ever know, but that poor child at MacWhister’s.”

But she was obliged to go down at last, and then she was half-alarmed again by finding her position made easy for her. Janet Snowe and little Miss Briggs stood upon the hearth together, holding each other’s hands. Janet was deathly pale. Isabella Briggs’ nose and eyes were red with emotion and tears.

Janet made a step forward, and spoke.

“Miss Rosalinda,” she said, “I have found an old friend, I thought I had lost. I owe Miss Briggs more grateful love than I can live long enough to pay her. She is the kindest friend I have on earth.” And she bent down with a little sob, and kissed Isabella’s shriveled hands.

“I’ll not tell Robina,” decided Rosalinda. “I couldn’t do it if I tried. It is their secret, and not mine.”

So she bore the burden within her kind, sentimental little heart; and sometimes she found it a rather trying one. She was constantly afraid of betraying herself. She grew so restless, that Miss Robina began to feel anxious about her, and threatened her with Dr. Floyd.

“I shall certainly send for him, if you do not improve,” she said. “You are so absent-minded, that you stare at Isabella and Janet, sometimes, until I am sure they must object to it; and when I speak to you, you almost jump. I did not think nerves were a weakness of yours, Rosalinda.”

Isabella Briggs had been with them nearly a month; and as her holiday was drawing to a close, she was beginning to speak sadly of packing the small trunk.

“I have had a long rest,” she said, “and I shall have to work hard to make it up. Madame Smythkins’,” shaking her head, “is not such an establishment as yours was, my dear Miss Bird.”

It was during the afternoon, in the course of which she said this, that Miss Robina confided to her a little sisterly plan of hers.

“I know Rosalinda would not hear of such a thing, if I mentioned it to her beforehand,” she remarked; “and so I have kept the matter to myself. I am anxious about Rosalinda. She is not herself; she needs attention. So, I have sent a line to Dr. Floyd, asking him to drop in this evening, in a friendly manner.”

It was not a pleasant evening. The day closed in wet and dreary, and Miss Robina almost gave up the idea that her favorite would come.

“Though I have always found that I could rely upon him,” she said to Miss Briggs.

But Miss Briggs could scarcely feel interested in the matter. She was in low spirits, and worked upon Rosalinda’s tatting silently. They were all rather depressed, it seemed. Miss Bird forgot to ring for lights, and they sat in a circle before the fire, and had very little to say to each other. Miss Rosalinda sat in her arm-chair, and stared at the coals; Miss Robina closed her eyes, and dozed; Isabella Briggs tatted mechanically; Janet stood with a hand on the mantel-piece, and regarded her friend with heavy, wistful eyes.

But there came a change; such a change as no one of them could forget till their dying day. It was heralded by a ring at the front door-bell, by a man’s voice in the hall, and then came the man himself, preceded by Mary Anne.

Miss Robina awakened, and rose to meet him, rather sleepily.

“Dr. Floyd,” she said. “Rosalinda, here is Dr. Floyd.”

Dr. Floyd advanced, holding out his hand, and Miss Rosalinda extended hers, feeling rather nervous.

But it was never taken. Just at that moment the fire flamed up suddenly, and its brightness fell upon the white face of the girl standing near it, and then the man started forward, and Miss Rosalinda heard again the cry she had heard when Isabella Briggs had caught Janet in her arms, only this time it was wilder, and more shaken.

“Beck! Beck! Oh, God! Have I found you!”

But the girl drew back, holding up her hand in a passionate gesture.

“Don’t come near me!” she said. “Don’t come near me! Don’t speak to me! Don’t look at me!”

He would have caught her in his arms, but she would not let him. All her womanhood dropped away from her. She flung herself upon her

knees at Isabella Briggs' feet, and clung to her like a child, sobbing wildly.

“Bella!” she cried out, “Keep me! Save me! Save me from him, as you saved me from myself! Don't let him touch me, Bella, or I shall die! For he is the man who broke my heart, and left me to face the world alone!”

Then little Miss Briggs was strong. She held the girl close to her breast; her little, meagre face glowed with honest anger, and her eyes flashed.

“Sir!” she said, “stand farther away from us, if you are a man at all! Leave us to ourselves. Leave my poor girl to me, as you left her to other strangers when she most needed your love and care. You are as hard as stone, and as cruel as the grave. God *may* forgive you, but I do not think He will.”

He only stared at her, in a blind, dull fashion, and then he stretched out his hands with a groan.

“Beck!” he said. “Beck, child!”

Miss Robina sank into her chair.

“Beck!” she gasped. “Janet! Isabella! Rosalinda!”

Miss Rosalinda, who had naturally burst into tears, wrung her hands.

“Robina,” she said, “it is poor, pretty Beck Stuart!”

The girl stirred upon Miss Briggs’ breast.

“Bella,” she whispered, “tell them how I have deceived them. Ask them to forgive me.”

So, Isabella Briggs told them.

“Her name is not Janet Snowe,” she said, the tears running down her cheeks. “Her name is Rebecca Stuart, and she is the poor child I told you of eight years ago. When her father died, she had nowhere to go but to Mrs. MacWhister. She lived with her when she kept school in Dundee, and she had a bitter life. The summer the school was moved to London, Mrs. MacWhister gave her a holiday, and she went alone, poor child, to a little, quiet, sea-side town. When she

was there, she met some one she had known, and liked, when she was at her father's house. It was a young man who had been one of her father's favorites. It was that man," pointing to Floyd. "And in those days he was young, and the kind of man who is always loved, whether he deserves it or not. Because I cannot bear to speak at any length, I will only tell you that, before the holiday was over, he had persuaded her to marry him, and she thought all her sorrow was over. She was happy for just three weeks, and then he told her that he must leave her for a few days; only a few days, to attend to some money matter. Well, he kissed her innocent lips, and went away; and from that day to this she never saw him again."

She would have continued, but Beck Stuart stopped her. She lifted her face, and looked up at Floyd.

"I will tell the rest," she said. "I know it best." She spoke in a hard voice, almost as if she was repeating a lesson.

“He went away, and he did not come back. I was only a child, sixteen years old, and I believed he would. I did not know where to write. I did not know what to do; and I could only wait. So I waited until I dare wait no longer, because the woman of the house frightened me with the things she said. I left her my address, and I went back to Mrs. MacWhister’s. I had nowhere else to go. Then I waited there, but nothing came — not a line nor a word. And, at last, one night Mrs. MacWhister came to me looking like a madwoman. She said she had found me out, and I had disgraced myself forever. She would not listen to a word I said, and in my misery I think I was mad, too. She told me to go, and I caught up a shawl, and ran out into the night. I think I wandered about the streets until morning, and then Bella found me. I don’t know why she cared for me, but she did. She took me to a little house in a by-street, and then I went down upon my knees on the floor,

and told her everything. She made me get up, and she cried and kissed me, and said she would try to help me, and no one should know. I made her promise not to tell. I stayed in that house for six months, and she gave me all the money she earned—I know she did. But I could not let her do it always, though she begged me to; so one morning I got up very early, and took my little boy in my arms, and I went away leaving her a letter. From that time to this I have fought for myself and Archie. It has been very hard sometimes, but I have done it. Miss Rosalinda,” turning to the little old maid, “the little boy you have seen playing in the Square is my little boy. I told him to play there, so that I could watch him, because, only to see him comforts me, and makes me forget. He is different from other children, and he is all I have in the world.”

She had scarcely finished speaking before Floyd held her in his arms. His face was white and

wild, and his limbs shook under him; the passion of grief, and pity, and love in his eyes was terrible to see. He would not let her go; he held her close and fast.

“The mother of my child cannot refuse to hear me,” he cried. “The mother of my child cannot condemn me unheard. I have that claim to plead, at least, thank God, thank God! Oh, Beck, my own! Do you think I have not a story to tell, too?”

A little moan broke from her lips.

“You left me,” she sobbed; “you left me all alone.”

“I left you, thinking I should hold you in my arms again in a few days, at farthest,” he answered, his words poured forth with mad eagerness; “and but that Fate was so cruel to us, all would have been fair and smooth. Oh, how cruel Fate has been! The morning I bade you good-by, I thought myself the happiest man on earth. I was so full of hope and joy that I could scarcely

contain myself. I was little more than a boy, and my heart was so light! When I reached London, I walked through the streets, instead of driving, and on my way I came upon a sight that stopped me. It was a woman crouching upon a door-step, moaning and shivering. I could not bear to pass her, and I stopped and spoke to her; but it seemed that she could not understand. She only looked up at me, and moaned afresh. Then I saw where the trouble lay. She was stricken with some desperate sickness, and was half-delirious. I could not go on then, so I did my best to help her. I called a cab, and put her into it, and went with her to the nearest hospital, and did not leave her until I had seen her comfortably provided for. But, before I had accomplished this, I had made a discovery. This poor creature, whom I had supported in my arms, was stricken with the most loathsome of diseases. The house-surgeon called me aside, and told me that she was infected with small-

pox, and he warned me to take all possible precautions at once. I went to my lodgings, and obeyed him in every trifle, but a dull fear seemed to seize upon me. That was why I would not write at first. I thought I would wait until the danger was over, if I escaped. But I did not escape. In a few days more I found I must give in, and then it was too late. It was weeks before my mind was clear. I lay at Death's door, and everybody deserted me but the old woman my doctor had engaged as nurse. Beck, my dear, for the sake of those childish, honeymoon days, and for the sake of the child I have never seen, say you believe me!"

She clung to him with a tempest of weeping. She held him as closely now as he had held her.

"Every word!" she sobbed. "Every word! Oh, how can I bear to hear it?"

"It was long before I could travel safely," he went on. "And though I wrote to you, I received no answer. But at last I thought I might go,

and I went; and, Beck, you were gone, and the little house stood empty.”

“Empty!” she echoed.

“Empty. The woman who kept it had gone to Australia, to join her husband. She had left the house scarcely a week after you did.”

Miss Rosalinda shook her head, and wiped her eyes afresh.

“Robina,” she murmured, “Angelica Ormondsby——” But there her feelings overpowered her.

“I went to Dundee,” continued Dr. Floyd, “though my long illness had left me a very indefinite impression of Mrs. MacWhister’s address. But I did not find you. At that time, I know now, you were in London. We had been so near to each other, my poor love, and yet so far away. Then, in my despair and weakness, I fell ill again, and was helpless for months; but from that day to this, Beck, I swear that I never gave up my search for you. I should never have given it up,

save with my life. Look at my face. See the gray streaks in my hair, and tell me whether a man who had been false could bear such marks as these."

She pulled the care-lined face down, and kissed it passionately, with all the remorseful abandon of a child. She kissed his hair; she even kissed his hands, and his coat. But in a moment more her strength gave way.

"Hold me close, Jack!" she cried, calling him by the old, boyish name he remembered so well. "Hold me close, Jack, and do not let me go! The sorrow did not kill me; but I think—I think the joy——" And she fainted upon his breast.

He carried her to the sofa, and laid her down; and, of course, for the next quarter of an hour, Miss Robina, and Miss Rosalinda, and Isabella Briggs, filled the room with a wild excitement of hurrying to and fro, and running against each other, and advising a score of remedies in chorus; and when the worst was over, and the girl opened

her eyes, the three grouped themselves about her, and were all fain to fan her, and to apply smelling-salts at once. But Beck only saw her husband; and when he knelt at her side, she curled her slender arm about his neck.

“Jack,” she whispered, “send somebody for my baby. He is seven years old, but he is my baby yet. Send somebody for my baby.”

Then Isabella Briggs stepped forward.

“Let me go,” she pleaded. “He knows me. He is my baby, too, Beck.”

“Yes,” said Beck. “Kiss me, Bella, and go.”

And Bella went, and did her errand well. And she who had saved Beck from despair and death, gave Beck’s child into his father’s arms, and thanked God, in her simple, kindly heart, that her work was done.

THE END.

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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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